



Frequently Asked Questions

Why do DoD agencies need biometrics?

The events of 9/11 showed us that what we considered security is not enough. Biometrics can be used in conjunction with, or in lieu of, passwords, pins, and other tokens to add an additional layer of security by establishing positive access control to information and information-based systems for authorized users.

What role is the BMO playing in the establishment of standards?

The office is currently working with the Biometrics Consortium, industry vendors, government and academia to establish international biometric standards. Biometric standards have also been introduced to the DoD Joint Architecture, which is the set of standards used by the acquisition community for building new information or information-based systems.

Does the BMO endorse any vendor or technology?

The BMO does not endorse any particular vendor or technology. The office is looking at the most mature COTS biometric technologies, such as the iris scan, fingerprint, voice and face recognition, and hand geometry.

What is the biometrics on the common access card (CAC) program?

This program involves putting biometric technology on the military's new smart ID card, the CAC. The CAC will allow only authorized military personnel and civilian employees access to facilities and computer networks. The testing phase of this program is scheduled to begin in mid 2002.

Is biometric technology an invasion of an individual's privacy?

The BMO is aware of the privacy issues. The office also knows that biometrics actually enhance privacy because you don't have to give out your personal information. The use of pictures as a screening tool has been in use for years.

Is the DoD involved in any biometric research activities?

The BMO in particular participates with the National Science Foundation in providing funding for the Center for Information Technology Research that is applicable to DoD concerns. There are various challenges that will benefit from this type of research, including the integration of biometrics with PKI & CAC, faster enrollment and response time, the requirement for rugged devices for harsh environments, template aging and liveness detection.

How and where is biometrics currently being used by the DoD, and by other federal agencies?

The DoD and other federal agencies currently use biometrics for physical access (iris scan, fingerprint) and logical access for computers. DoD used biometrics for years for chemical demilitarization (i.e. storage, disposal areas).

What is the BMO's role in supporting Homeland Defense efforts?

The BMO is working closely with DoD Agencies and Services in order to make sure that their secure areas and networks are protected from current and future threats. This strategy involves deploying biometrics as an additional level of security for Agencies and Services.

What types of future systems for biometrics is the government considering?

Biometrics can be employed to enable/enhance security in a variety of areas such as information assurance, POW and refugee processing, weapons control, common access card (smart card), Section 508, force protection and access control, and healthcare. The possibilities regarding future systems are endless.